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ARMENIAN STUDIES
ÉTUDES ARMÉNIENNES
IN MEMORIAM HAÏG BERBÉRIAN

DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN

Editor



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ARMENIAN YISUN

ERIC P. HAMP

The decades in Indo-European were formed up to '60' with a linking sound $*H_e$, i.e. the non-colouring laryngeal, joining the unit and the form for 'decade'. Thus Greek *πεντήκοντα* and Skt. *pañcāśat*-point to $*-ē-$ = $*-eH_e-$ as a linking syllable. This observation makes it clear that the normal reflex of IE $*RH = *\bar{R}$ in Armenian is *aRa*, and that $*rH$ specifically gives *āra*. Thus Arm. *ewt'anasun* must simply be $*septn-H_e-kōNtH_a$, reflecting however the change of final $*-m$ to $-n$. Likewise we have $*k^wtwr-H_e-komtH_a$ [*k'wtwrH_e.komtH_a*] '40' > $*twrkōntə$ > *k'ārasun*.

It can further be assumed that IE $*k^w$ before *i*, regardless of the problem of its fate before other vowels (in particular, $*e$), gave *h*. This seems well supported by *him* 'why?', and would also be a natural stage in the development to zero observed in certain forms. Thus in the aorist middle *hayesjir* 'look!' we have $*dh_i$ (: Skt. *-dhi*, Greek *-θι*) + *-Vr* (1), beside *hayec'ay*. Now when we consider *hayim* it would be natural and direct to compare Skt. *ikṣate*, which is $*H_{oi}-H_0k^wst-e-t-o-i$ and therefore related to *akn ac'k'*. So, then, we see too that *n-ayim* (2) is the compound reflected in Old Irish *enech* 'face' (3). All these facts, plus the middle diathesis, confirm for us that the verb *hayim* does in fact correspond to Indic *ikṣate*, and that *akn* (i.e. Lat. *oculus*, Greek *ὄσσε*) actually lies concealed in this verb. Now the IE root in question is $*H_0ok^w-$; the vocalism of *akn ac'k'* reflects

(1) A. Meillet, *Esquisse d'une grammaire comparée de l'arménien classique*, Vienna, 1936, pp. 120-1.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 131.

(3) See my analysis, *BSL*, 68 (1973), pp. 77-93.

zero-grade $*H_0k^w$ -, with vocalized laryngeal (i.e. schwa), while the consonantism k (: \check{c}) reflects a re-assignment from positions of neutralization in the final of a root noun. On the other hand, from prevocalic $*H_0$ - we expect Arm. h -; cf. *hoviw*, *hot*. Thus at an early date $*H_0V$ - and syllabic $*H_0C$ - crossed to give $*ha$ -. So, $*H_0ok^w$ - and $*H_0k^w\text{-}\bar{e}\text{-}m\text{-}o\text{-}i$ > $*hak^wimoi$. We may then assume $*hak^wimoi$ > $*hahimoi$ > $*haimoi$ > $*hajimoi$ > *hayim*.

Let us now turn to the much debated numeral '50'. With the above assumptions, only one abnormal change is required: a simple shift in nasal cluster in a word that already contains two nasal clusters. So we begin, as above, with $*penk^we\text{-}H_e\text{-}komtH_a$ > $*penk^w\bar{e}kont\bar{a}$. This yields by regular Armenian rules $*pink^wikunta$.

We now propose a metathesis of nasal cluster in this heavily laden word, which speakers might easily re-order. Thus $*pink^wikunta$ > $*pik^winkunta$, which accumulates all nasals together; perhaps this may be regarded as a complex (or long-component) phonetic assimilation, with a single prolonged nasalization.

I now assume that both $*p$ and $*k^w$ before i lose their occlusion; i.e. they become spirants, finally yielding h . This development may be assigned simply to VOICELESS ROUNDED (OR LABIALIZED) STOP. Thus $*pik^winkunta$ > $*hihinsunda$. Then nasals before sibilant spirants are lost (*us* 'shoulder', *mis* 'meat'), yielding $*hihisunda$.

The normal loss of medial $*h$ then brings us to $*hiisund$, and this apparently developed a glide (as in *hayim* above) to produce $*hiisun$, or $*hiyisun$. The late prehistoric Armenian syncope of high vowels then gave $*hyisun$; and this plausibly yielded *yisun*, regardless of the phonetics which we assign to Classical Armenian y .

A possible final phonetic development was: $*hiyisun$ > $*hysun$ > [hyɨsun] or [hɨsun] = *yisun*.